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Art Notes and Hints.

GIORGIONE is said to have frequently used a pure vermilion ground to paint naked flesh over. The remarkable richness and glow of his flesh tints is ascribed to this device.

⁂

DO not begin a picture calculating to finish it before this or that date. The painter, like the poet, must carry out his inspirations without restriction as to time. An artisan may work by the day, an artist, never!

⁂

IN selecting brushes let the sables be rather full, in order to avoid dryness of touch, particularly in the drawing of branches. Both bristles and sables should be placed in water for an hour or so before work, which makes them more easy to clean afterward, and tends to preserve them. Short bristles are most useful in landscape, nevertheless, a few long, slender, and very elastic bristles are useful to introduce touches of color into masses already laid and still wet. The badger-hair blender is also useful, but has its inconveniences. Much used, it gives a soft and weak appearance to the work, and is destructive of firmness and relief. It is best to restrict its use to the skies and water. The blender should be very soft and supple, and should have a strong handle.

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IT is well to use a mahl-stick even when sketching in the country.

⁂

IN retouching, or in doing work which is to stand, it is best to use siccative for lakes only, not for ochres or other earthy colors, nor for white.

⁂

WHEN a painting "dries in" before it is finished, Robertson's medium is good to restore the brilliancy of the colors. Very little of it should be used. A rag soaked with it, and passed lightly over the picture, will suffice. It may then be used with the pigments for the added work.

When a painting is finished, and is completely dry, it should be varnished with the best white varnish. Cheap varnishes are apt to "bloom," that is, to form patches of a bluish tint upon the surface.

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AS a general rule, one should never touch an oil-painting unless it is quite wet or quite dry. Unless very exceptional effects are required, there is nothing more fatal than to work at a picture when it is sticky.

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IT is not generally known, I think, that there is a material difference between the pigments "grey" and "gray." Standage puts it thus: "Grey is a grey compounded with black and white; gray is a gray with the blue replacing the black."

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INDIAN ink and Chinese ink are not, as generally supposed, the same thing with different names. The former is composed of shellac, 10 parts; borax, 20 parts; lamp-black and water, 40 parts. Chinese ink is the finest lamp-black mixed with the oil of sesame and a little camphor. It may be distinguished by its being dissolved in vinegar without any precipitate.

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TWO landscapes hang side by side. One represents a desert scene under the full blaze of the mid-day sun. The other is a moonlight scene. The highest light of both is rendered by the same pigment, viz., white; in the one case, perhaps, toned to a slightly yellow hue, in the other to a slightly blue one; and yet the scenes represented differ greatly in luminosity—sunlight is nearly a million times as bright as moonlight. These highest lights, that have almost the same luminosity in the pictures, represent a difference of nearly a millionfold in nature. And yet one looks like moonlight, and the other like sunlight. How does the eye get over these discrepancies? "The answer to this question," says John Collier, in his capital little "Primer of Art" (Macmillan & Co.), "is suggested by the very astonishment with which we first hear that sunlight is a million times as bright as moonlight. The fact is that the eye pays hardly any attention to variations of total illumination—the relative illuminations of the different objects seen by it at one time being to it the important thing. These remain practically unchanged throughout great variations of the total light—variations to which the eye adapts itself very readily, and almost unconsciously."

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TITIAN, Paul Véronèse, and Raphael used to lay a coat of brown red or vermilion under draperies which they wished to paint in blue, saving them from coldness of effect. De Latour and Greuze put a rubbing of black crayon under the flesh tints which were to be of a bluish cast.

ARTIST.

Amateur Photography.

CONDUCTED BY GEORGE G. ROCKWOOD.

PORTRAIT LIGHTING.

A GENERAL suggestion in these columns some time since to the effect that a sitter should be placed in about the same light as a piece of sculpture, and illuminated in about the same manner, has brought me inquiries for "further particulars," and some portraits taken in the manner suggested. These latter have excellent qualities, but show a lack of consideration, in most instances, of the circumstances which have been, so to speak, created and yet ignored! As a matter of course, if there are no reflectors, and the shadows are absolutely black, good results must be made at the expense of time. While I maintain the correctness of the general theory, I have in many instances found it necessary to modify the methods employed. For the last few months I have pursued a series of experiments directly in this line. Acting on the theory stated, that a sculpturesque light was to be desired, I removed all side reflectors and concentrated the lights to a greater degree than ever before. Some of my results were very satisfactory, but in many instances they involved long exposures. I also found that photographic portraiture under such circumstances was justice without mercy! With the middle-aged and old the effect was strongly to exaggerate the lines and shadows, and never to favor the sitter. Artistically, the effects were superb; as portraits, the results were not such as would please the average sitter. I soon satisfied myself of this by making two negatives of each sitter, one as above described, and one in more diffused light and the shadows softened by a side-screen. The result was almost always the same—the sitter chose the latter. I therefore work now to get all the effect possible by direct light modified by means of a head-screen, with the shadows rendered transparent by a reflector. I produce the strongest effect first; then modify as already explained. I have said nothing of backgrounds, having discussed them in previous numbers of the magazine. Of course the contrasts and general effects can only be secured by a careful consideration both of the distance and the tone of the background. It is almost needless to say that the latter should always be in contrast with the lights and shadows of the image, in a word darker than the highest light, and lighter than the deepest shadow of the head. With the background screen already described, hung in the centre and capable of tipping forward or backward, almost any tone can be obtained.

HEAD-SCREENS.—Some amateur portraiture has been exhibited lately which comes near to the highest standard, the principal fault being flat lights to the pictures which yet apparently are full-timed. These pictures are mostly taken by a side light from ordinary windows, and, of course, hard to manage. If a piece of thin Swiss muslin or some similar fabric be stretched over the upper sash the light will be softened, and much more form and modelling will be preserved. The exposure need not be much prolonged.

PORTRAIT SIZES.—"Dilemma" asks why a bromide enlargement which he sends, "looks so small"—giving the impression that the original of the portrait is a dwarf? The reason is that the head is too large. I have the impression that any portrait smaller than life-size and larger than half-life-size will give the impression of a diminutive subject; so I never make a head larger than half-life-size, say five inches, unless I make it full life-size—nine or ten inches. Any departure from this will, in adult portraiture, give the result complained of above. A curious instance of this was seen in the National Academy a few years ago. Evidently there was a scarcity of wall-space in the house where the picture was to be hung, for a group of adults were not only crowded into the canvas, but the heads were all about an inch or more under life-size. The result was that a company of distinguished gentlemen looked like dwarfs.

A CAUTION.—As I had occasion to call attention to the non-actinic quality of the winter light, so it is necessary now to caution the field photographer that the light is at present at its greatest power, and small stops and short exposures are in order. Not only is the light stronger, but the heat is a very important element in the quick working of plates. If one has a stock of what were thought in the winter to be slow plates, they will now be likely to give excellent results.

A "BEFOGGED PRINTER" sends some faded-looking prints for examination, but incidentally lets it out that his silver bath is "not quite thirty grains." I think the general average is never less than forty grains to the ounce. For my own part, I never use less than sixty.

PHOTOGRAPHING ON GOLD.—Photographic impressions are made on all metals—gold, silver, or copper—but I hardly feel justified in complying with a correspondent's request to publish the formula yet, as I believe I am the only one in the business doing this as a specialty, and must ask a little indulgence for a "trade secret."

DAGUERREOTYPE COPIES.—It is sometimes difficult to get rid of reflections in copying daguerreotypes. My plan is to erect a black velvet screen in front of the copying lens, leaving an aperture just large enough for the lens. This overcomes the reflection from the brass work and glass of the lens; I then place the daguerreotype in direct sunlight, and usually secure good results.

AN IMPROVEMENT IN VIGNETTING.—Mr. Lyonel Clark makes a suggestion for the preparation of vignettes, which seems to me admirable. Every one is aware of the system of vignetting by placing in front of the negative a piece of cardboard having in it a suitable aperture. Mr. Clark's improvement upon this is to substitute for the cardboard a sheet of thin lead. That which Mr. Clark uses is what is known as "four-ounce" lead, and is, therefore, exceedingly thin, and, consequently, cheap. It is manufactured mainly for the purpose of lining damp walls upon which paper is intended afterward to be hung. Having obtained a piece of this lead somewhat larger than the printing-frame—this is important—with a pair of light scissors cut out the oval or other desired form of opening. Lay this opening over the figure in the negative to be vignetted, and, having adjusted it carefully, the margins of the sheet lead are then bent over the edges of the printing-frame, by which the mask is permanently retained in position. Owing to the extreme pliancy of the lead it may be lifted up from the negative to any desired extent, so as to give the maximum of softness to the margins of the portrait, or, if desired, it may be raised irregularly, so as to produce any effect as regards softness of outline demanded by artistic requirements. Unlike a paper or card mask, this is unaffected by rain or the weather, and, when done with, the margins are raised and the sheet of lead is ready to be fitted on any other portrait. For large portraits it may be desirable to employ a somewhat thicker sheet.

A NEW SENSITIVE PAPER has appeared, which evidently is an emulsion paper; but the inventor declares—perhaps owing to the Anthony-Eastman litigation—that it is *not* a bromide paper. The exposure, development and results are, apparently, the same with both, while a degree of brilliancy and depth of tone is afforded by the new paper which is about all one can hope for.

TO SAVE MOUNTING.—I have made some bromide enlargements of late in which I masked the print with an oval, giving as a result a clear white margin, rendering it unnecessary either to mount the picture or use a mat.

BURNT-IN-ENAMELS.—While this journal is conducted primarily in the interest, and for the guidance of amateurs, it is pleasant to know that its suggestions sometimes lead to the reader establishing himself in business. Two such cases, growing out of information acquired solely through this department, recently came to my knowledge. One person had established himself in a business for a process for relief printing; another had engaged in the making of burnt-in-enamels, especially for very small portraits, and other pictures for mounting in jewelry. Another subscriber, Mr. W. H. Jauvonneau, of Newark, showed me, the other day, some beautiful examples of the enamel process, the knowledge of which he had obtained through these columns. I would like to lay stress on some of the directions already given concerning the latter process, especially as to the necessity of thoroughly washing the films in all the stages. In each case in which specimens of the process have been shown me for criticism I found the same defects: viz., yellow stains, and a loss of a portion of the image, not the film. This is undoubtedly due to lack of cleanliness on the part of the operator, and insufficient washing of the film, probably *after* using the cyanide solution. In my former remarks on the subject I urged the use of iridium chloride instead of platinum. Other experimenters have not found it work so well as I have done, perhaps because they have not been successful in obtaining the pure chemical. When in London, last summer, I was an interested spectator for many hours of the work of Mr. Henderson in his laboratory in King William Street. His pictures are unquestionably the finest made in this line, and, of course, his experience on the subject is valuable. It appeared that he invariably stained his films with the chloride of platinum, and he told me that a long series of experiments had proved that platinum was much better than iridium, owing to the uniformity of action of the former. Mr. Henderson works the entire process, from making the collodion transparency to the final glaze in the furnace. His ovens were heated by Bunsen gas-jets and were under complete control, and proved efficient in every way.